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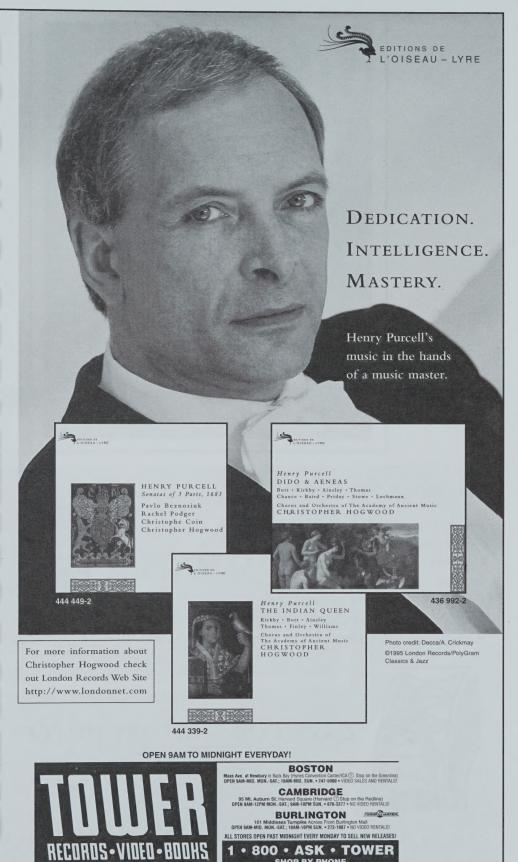
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Handel & Haydn Society Christopher Hogwood, Artistic Director 1995-1996 Season

Friday, October 13, 1995 at 8:00 p.m. Sunday, October 15 at 3:00 p.m. Symphony Hall, Boston

Christopher Hogwood, Conductor

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Coriolan Overture, Op.62

Piano Concerto No.1 in C Major, Op.15

Allegro con brio Largo Rondo: Allegro

> Robert Levin, fortepiano Cadenzas improvised by Mr. Levin

> > -INTERMISSION-

Symphony No.8 in F Major, Op.93

Allegro vivace e con brio Allegretto scherzando Tempo di Menuetto Allegro vivace

CHRISTOPHER HOGWOOD, CONDUCTOR



One of the world's most active conductors, Christopher Hogwood is an internationally-recognized pioneer in "Historically-Informed Performance," presenting music on the instruments and with the performing techniques of the period in

which it was composed. He is the founder of The Academy of Ancient Music, the first British orchestra formed to play Baroque and Classical music on instruments appropriate to the period. He now shares with that orchestra a busy schedule of performances, touring, and recording. In addition to being H&H Artistic Director, Mr.

Hogwood is Principal Guest Conductor of The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, a moderninstrument ensemble, and Artistic Director of the annual Mozart Festival in Washington D.C. He is also active conducting opera throughout the world and on several recordings, and is a regular guest conductor of the Australian Opera. Mr. Hogwood enjoys a fine reputation as a harpsichordist and clavichord player, and is a highly successful recording artist for London Records/L'Oiseau-Lyre. He has also made his mark in the fields of television and video and as a popular radio broadcaster. He has written a number of books, including his acclaimed biography of Handel, published by Thames & Hudson. Christopher Hogwood was made a Commander of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth in 1989.

ROBERT LEVIN, FORTEPIANO



Robert Levin's performances have been acclaimed throughout the United States and Europe, and his free fantasies and improvised cadenzas have dazzled audiences and critics alike. In recital and with major orchestras, he has performed

repertoire from the 16th century to Boulez and Harbison. Equally at home at the fortepiano as at the piano, he has collaborated with Frans Brüggen, John Eliot Gardiner, Christopher Hogwood, and Roger Norrington. He has recorded on several labels, and is recording the complete cycle of Mozart Piano concertos with Christopher Hogwood and the Academy of Ancient Music on London/L'Oiseau-Lyre. A recognized Mozart

scholar, Robert Levin's completions of Mozart fragments have been published, recorded and performed throughout the world. His cadenzas to the Mozart violin concertos were recorded by the Vienna Philharmonic for Deutsche Grammophon. Mr. Levin's reconstruction of Mozart's Symphonie Concertante in E-flat Major for four winds and orchestra, K. 297B, was premiered by the Vienna Philharmonic in Salzburg and has subsequently been performed worldwide. The first of three recordings of the work, by Philips, won the 1985 Grand Prix International du Disque. A monograph detailing the work's history and the process of its reconstruction by Mr. Levin has been hailed as a musicological thriller. Mr. Levin has most recently completed his celebrated reconstruction of Mozart's Requiem. A frequent performer with H&H, Robert Levin was soloist and special guest throughout the 1994 Mozart Weekend.

THE HANDEL & HAYDN SOCIETY

The Handel & Haydn Society is a premier chorus and period orchestra under the artistic direction of renowned conductor Christopher Hogwood. H&H is a leader in "Historically-Informed Performance," performing music on the instruments and with the styles of the period in which it was composed for an authentic sound and concert experience. Founded in 1815, H&H is the oldest continuously-performing arts organization in the country, with a long tradition of musical excellence. In the nineteenth century, the Society gave the American premieres of several Baroque and Classical works, including Handel's Messiah (1818), which H&H has performed every year since 1854, Samson (1845), Solomon (1855),

and Israel in Egypt (1859), and Bach's B Minor Mass (1887) and St. Matthew Passion (1889). In recent years, H&H has achieved widespread acclaim through recordings on the London Records/L'Oiseau-Lyre label, national broadcasts, and performances across North America. In addition to its Symphony Series at Boston's Symphony Hall, H&H offers a Chamber Series with concerts at both Jordan Hall at New England Conservatory and Sanders Theatre in Cambridge. H&H's innovative educational program brings enjoyment and knowledge of classical music to over 5,000 students in 45 schools throughout Massachusetts.

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TOWERING BEETHOVEN

by Steven Ledbetter

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Overture to Coriolan, Op. 62
Composed and first performed in 1807
for a play by Heinrich Joseph von Collin

Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Op. 15 Composed c. 1796–98

Symphony No. 8 in F Major, Op. 93 Composed c. 1812; first performed in Vienna in 1814.

WHY BEETHOVEN?

Why does Beethoven's music, after nearly two centuries, remain so firmly fixed at the center of our musical life? Other composers have written large amounts of music as well-crafted. Others have enjoyed massive support, even verging on idolatry, from the listening public. Others have challenged great performers to give their best, and have inspired philosophers to place them among the intellectual giants of the age. But Beethoven has remained the touchstone of what it means to be a "composer"—even though much of our Beethoven-derived image of the composer has been based largely on myths that refuse to die (as witness the unhistorical film Immortal Beloved, which not only visited old myths but invented new ones). No composer's music is performed more frequently in the programs of symphony orchestras or chamber ensembles, and, considering that Beethoven completed only a single opera, he retains an amazingly strong position in the opera house as well. It seems so reasonable, so right, to have Beethoven's name—and only Beethoven's name-inscribed in the proscenium arch of Symphony Hall. To be sure, Beethoven's presence here, in lordly isolation, is an artifact of the nineteenth century's near-deification of the composer. But while other composers, at one time seemingly the towering peak, have now receded to a more modest position in the mountain range of music history, Beethoven still towers. His music—even in its most lyric momentsseems inevitably tinged with drama, and in its most dramatic moments it is powerful and compelling. The American Transcendentalists found in his symphonies music constructed apparently on abstract musical patterns that nonetheless seemed to have a message to convey and could actually serve the purpose of ennoblement. We may now feel that it is somewhat naïve to insist that listening to Beethoven makes us better—and yet, once we fall under the spell again, we are convinced anew.

CORIOLAN OVERTURE

Beethoven's music has always struck listeners as essentially dramatic, and this is especially the case of music with a dramatic impetus that captured the composer's imagination. One might guess that Coriolan was inspired by the Coriolanus of Shakespeare, whose work Beethoven knew and admired in German translation. But the Overture was composed for a much less elevated source, a play by Heinrich Joseph von Collin which had enjoyed a brief vogue in Vienna during the years from 1802 to 1805. Originally the play was performed with secondhand music, adapted by Abbé Stadler from Mozart's Idomeneo. Beethoven apparently admired the somewhat hackneyed poetic tragedy for the ideals of classical virtue embodied therein (and the author was, in any case, a friend of his, and an influential one at that, since he served as Court Secretary).

All we know about the date of the work is Beethoven's indication "1807" on the manuscript and the fact that it had been performed by March of that year not once but twice in subscription concerts given at the home of Prince Lobkowitz. By April 24 the management of the Imperial Theater mounted a single performance of Collin's drama using Beethoven's overture, so as to unite the play with the music that it inspired—no doubt at the suggestion of Prince Lobkowitz himself, who was a director of the theater.

The combination of music with drama seems to have been no improvement over the music

alone; the play has apparently never been performed since. Beethoven's overture, on the other hand, recognized from the first as being "full of fire and power," is one of his most admired short orchestral works, a probing essay in musical drama. The tension of Beethoven's favorite dramatic key, C minor, is heightened by orchestral chords punctuating the weakest beat of the measure at the phrase endings in the Allegro theme. The whole overture ends with a wonderfully dramatic use of silence—a musical suggestion of tragedy far more potent than that accomplished by the prolix rhetoric of Collin's verse.

PIANO CONCERTO NO. 1 IN C

Though he began his career as a professional musician playing the viola, Beethoven was primarily a pianist in his early years. His early playing was described as "somewhat rude and hard" for lack of exposure to the instrument's nuances in the hands of a master. In his late teens, Beethoven was taken to hear and play for a certain Abbé Sterkel, renowned at the time for the lightness and grace of his technique. The young man was immediately struck by the different approach to the keyboard and was at first reluctant to play after hearing such an impressive performance. Sterkel, who knew a piece Beethoven had recently published, prevailed upon him to play it by questioning his ability to perform such a difficult piece. Thus challenged, Beethoven began and astonished his listeners by capturing at once Sterkel's graceful performing style, which he had just heard for the first time.

A composer who was also a virtuoso performer in the Classical era was much more likely to make a satisfactory income from concertos that he wrote for himself to play than from any other musical genre (unless perhaps he had the good fortune to be a successful opera composer). In his early career Beethoven composed more concertos than symphonies and became well known as a superbly

dramatic and expressive pianist. If he had not lost his hearing—and thus been forced to forego playing in public—he might well have continued writing piano concertos all his life.

Actually, Beethoven had already written at least two piano concertos before writing "Number 1." The first was composed in 1784 while he was still in Bonn and was never published. About 1795 he composed the B-flat concerto in Vienna and played it fairly frequently. Probably because performances were a reasonable source of income (and perhaps also because he was not completely satisfied with the work). Beethoven with-

held this concerto from publishers
for a number of years. As a result
it finally came out as his Second
Concerto, Opus 19, although
it was composed some years
before the so-called First
Concerto, Opus 15.

We know little about

the actual composition of the Opus 15 concerto,

but it seems to have been started about 1796 and finished in 1798 when Beethoven probably gave the first public performance. The concerto calls for a larger orchestra than the earlier B-flat concerto, with clarinets, trumpets, and timpani, which lend a markedly different and fuller sonority to the ensemble. More important, though, is the new sense of organic development that Beethoven brings to this piece. The extended orchestral ritornello is more closely argued than before. The simple rhythm of the opening gesture and its octave leap upwards underlie much of what happens thereafter. The orchestra presents only the first part of the "second theme," then repeats the gambit twice in different keys, as if searching for the continuation, but leaving the

The Largo feels almost throughout like chamber music, it is so transparent. Here Beethoven especially revels in the sweet sound of his clarinets (flutes and oboes are silent throughout

"real" conclusion to be introduced by the soloist.

the movement). The Finale shows us the Beethoven of unbuttoned humor and sprightly wit. The main rondo theme is of a popular character (like those in so many of Haydn's symphonies), though its unusual phrasing already moves it far beyond folk-song imitation. It sets up a basic rhythmic pulse that continues throughout and defines a melodic character of lighthearted play. The first contrasting melody begins with the tune of a folk song well known in Beethoven's day, "Die Katze lässt das Mausen nicht" ("The cat won't give up mousing"). But Beethoven gives us only enough to tease before moving on to a new continuation. The feather-light changes in key, mood, tone, texture, and theme keep this finale smiling from beginning to end. Little wonder that the work was a hit in 1798—and still is today.

Symphony No. 8 in F Major

As happens so often in his work, Beethoven composed his Seventh and Eighth symphonies together, sketching them at roughly the same time in a manuscript now known as the Petter sketchbook. He apparently liked the challenge and the change of pace that comes with working on two very different pieces at the same time, something he had already done with the Fifth and Sixth symphonies. The Fifth and Sixth symphonies had even been premiered on the same concert; but for the next pair, Beethoven chose to introduce them separately about two months apart. The Eighth was first heard on February 27, 1814.

The premiere of the Seventh the preceding December had been one of the most successful concerts of Beethoven's life, establishing him without question as the greatest living composer. When Beethoven premiered the Eighth two months later, he performed it after the Seventh. Under the circumstances, the Seventh, a far longer work of great visceral energy, simply overwhelmed the new score. When Beethoven offered the symphonies to an English publisher, his letter seems to patronize the later work somewhat, since he describes them as "a grand symphony in A major (one of my most excellent works) and a smaller symphony in F major." But size alone is not the central factor here. If Beethoven could call the Eighth a smaller work, he surely meant so only in the objective sense of the number of measures contained within it. When Czerny once remarked that the Eighth was much less popular than the Seventh, Beethoven replied gruffly, "That's because it's so much better."

Although the F-major symphony was composed largely during a period of family strife for Beethoven, it is surprisingly cheerful. The opening movement of the Eighth is short in length compared to that of the Seventh, but it is full of events. The opening phrases form a complete melody (how rare that is for Beethoven!), but immediately after the cadence the music begins to open out and grow in the most astonishing way. The second movement is an amusing homage to Beethoven's friend Mälzel, the inventor of the metronome, a device that Beethoven found invaluable in giving composers, for the first time, a way to specify precise tempos for their music. The cheerful, jesting movement is filled with humorous touches (including a suggestion at the end that the mechanical marvel has broken down). Its scherzando marking makes it rather faster than a slow movement was expected to be. Beethoven compensates by making his next movement—for which we expect a rollicking scherzo—Tempo di Menuetto, a marking he had long since ceased using in his symphonies. This movement particularly is responsible for the symphony's reputation as a Haydnesque "throwback."

Having held his horses back, so to speak, for three movements, Beethoven lets them go in the merry rush of the rondo-like tune that seems about to come to a close on a normal dominant C when it is suddenly jerked up to C-sharp, only to have the unexpected note drop away as quickly as it had arrived. The same thing happens at the recapitulation, and though the bubbling high spirits leave us little time to worry about details, the sheer obtrusiveness of that note lingers in the ear, demanding consideration. The questions are answered in the immense coda, where the same obtrusive note returns with harmonic consequences, generating a new and distant tonal diversion that must be worked out before we can return safely home. At this pace, Beethoven's wit leaves us invigorated but breathless.

—Steven Ledbetter is musicologist and program annotator for the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

The Handel & Haydn Society would like to recognize the following individuals, corporations, and foundations for their generous support of the H&H/Mark Morris Dance Group production of Orfeo ed Euridice next spring. This listing includes contributions designated specifically for the project that were received by September 20, 1995.

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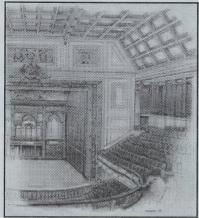
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